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SEMINAR REPORT

SEMINAR ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CIA TO PROVIDE
SUBSTANTIVE INTELLIGENCE TO THE CONGRESS



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Center for the Study of Intelligence
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505
9 January 1980

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE

Seminar on the Responsibility of CIA to Provide
Substantive Intelligence to the Congress*

9 January 1980
1330 - 1630
Room 1001 C of C

The following were the key points to emerge from the seminar:

--Executive Order 12036 charges the DCI to facilitate the use of national foreign intelligence products by the Congress in a secure manner.

--Those analysts we send to talk to Congress are looked on as CIA experts and not as spokesman for the Community. Indeed, we are frequently asked to identify our differences with DIA or State.

--Although our first priority is to the select intelligence committees, we certainly are expected to respond to requests from all of the Congressional Committees.

--The OLC has a liaison officer designated for each of the eight oversight committees. The advance work plan of OLC staffers directs them to seek out new Congressional consumers.

--The Congressional Research Service occasionally comes to us with requests they have received and this results in our doing their work. CRS can publish unclassified reports on topics we may not want to, for example SALT verification. Only a small proportion of our support to Congress involves requests from CRS, however, and the same can be said for the other Congressional components--the Government Accounting Office, the Office of Technology Assessment, and the Congressional Budget Office.

--Senators and Representatives, by virtue of election, are considered to be fully cleared for classified information. Sometimes they specifically ask for unclassified information for use in speeches, etc., and are highly appreciative of

*A list of participants is at annex

unclassified publications. As a result, the Agency is increasingly viewed by Congress as the "promised land," having an abundance of what Congress is starved for--information. Our desire to be responsive creates two problems, one of leaks and one of creating additional consumers.

--Although the burden of providing briefings is significant, in reality there is an increasingly more burdensome problem of providing the written word. Congress appears to have an insatiable appetite. Our responsibility is to get the product to the consumer and we must continue to meet that challenge. A regular dissemination list exists for unclassified documents but classified documents are sent on an ad hoc basis.

--Briefing Senators and Representatives is a responsibility all accept. But what about staffers? Key staff people have a significant influence on the thinking of their principals. Staff members, however, do not have the same priority as their bosses, and most are asked to come to Headquarters for briefings.

--The nine daily Congressional recipients of the National Intelligence Daily were identified as the eight oversight committees and George Murphy, who is Director of the Office of National Security Information for the Senate. NIDs are sent down in the morning and returned in the evening. Readers are primarily Staff Directors, but the Congressmen themselves have shown a growing interest. The DCI considers the NID as a record of notification to the Congress of items of intelligence.

--It is important that briefers be attuned to the political impact of their topics. We do not always prepare briefers as well as we could in the subtleties of the Congressional briefings. There is a trade-off between smoothness and political awareness on the one hand, and expertise on the other. Sometimes we have both in a briefer. We are always better off to send the person with general knowledge; we can answer any detailed questions later.

--Requests for data on agriculture and energy bring us in contact with new committees. Recently members of the House Agriculture Committee, who had not been exposed previously to Agency information, were very impressed with a briefing on Soviet grain.

--Frequently we provide pre-trip briefings and are offered post-trip observations by Congressional travelers. Sometimes, if we can not talk directly with the Congressman, we can talk with a member of the staff who also went on the trip.

--We must adjust to the Congressional briefing business. We should evaluate our resources and ensure we have sufficient manpower to meet the task. We benefit from acquiring the Congressional perspective. Most analysts enjoy speaking to members of the legislative branch and most convey a favorable image of the Agency. The oral briefings have proved to be much more effective than the printed word.

--Overnight storage of codeword documents is authorized only at the select intelligence committees and in the area occupied by George Murphy in the Capitol. Some advantages were put forth for a CIA outpost on Capitol Hill but it was judged that such a presence would offer too easy access and would result in even greater demands for Agency products and information.

--Documents containing [REDACTED] data pose special problems for Congressional distribution. The Directorate of Operations currently places tight restrictions on the release of [REDACTED] documents and many times we have to deny a request from the Hill. This causes much concern in the Office of the Legislative Counsel.

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--The Agency should not brief with others from the executive branch, where avoidable, because of the opportunity for the audience to play off one briefer against another. There is also the problem of being asked to provide testimony that is unhelpful to administration policy. In such situations the briefer must know when to "dance" and when to give a straight answer.

--The individual offices generally decide who will be the briefer to satisfy a specific request. The OLC can provide assistance when it can identify particularly good briefers from past experience. The management of the National Foreign Assessments Center should consider Congressional briefings as a key segment of the duties of its analysts.

--OLC staffers believe Agency briefers are received as experts and that our reputation is excellent. Congressmen do not forget the good support we provide and this aids us in other ways.

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